Museums Australia (Victoria) 2014

COLLECTION POLICY TEMPLATE







Collection Policy Template

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How to use this template:

You can use this template as a reference, either to compare with an existing document, or as background reading for preparing a new document.

You can also use this template to create your own document by following the steps below.

- 1. Insert the name of your museum at the beginning of the document and change the title of the document and the footer at the bottom of the document (to the name you want to call the document, and the date or version of the document).
- 2. The governing body will need to read the explanatory notes and examples (these are shaded in the template), discuss each section and formulate the key points for your museum.
- 3. The template can then be typed into directly under the relevant section. Press the 'insert' key before you start each line and the underlining will disappear as you type. There is no typing limit but the lines give an indication of how much space you might allocate for each section.
- 4. Finally, delete all the instructions in the shaded areas.

Notes

- Some of the examples (in italics) are there to explain the section such as the
 examples relating to the Key Themes and you will need to write these from
 scratch. Other examples are more like guidelines for standard clauses in
 Collection Policies such as steps for de-accessioning and you may wish to
 adopt some of these examples directly into your policy. The easiest way to do
 this would be to make any changes to the text or formatting, then remove the
 shading, and then delete the rows with the lines.
- You may wish to make changes to the template eg change terminology or re-order or re-group information to suit the way you do things – as long as each section is covered you can create a useful guiding document for your museum which meets recognised museum standards.

COLLECTION POLICY TEMPLATE Museums Australia (Victoria) 2014
1. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE OR MISSION STATEMENT
A statement of purpose is a formal, written statement which defines the museum's most basic goals.
It ensures that the objectives of the museum remain clear and understood by all involved. Including it here will place your policy in the context of the museum's overall objectives. See the Forward Plan Template for guidelines and examples for a Statement of Purpose.
2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE COLLECTION POLICY
What will the document be used for?
e.g. As the guiding document for the development and management of the collection.

3. WHAT THE MUSEUM WILL COLLECT

Identify the key themes and stories of the museum and the types of objects which the museum will collect.

Consider the categories below to help formulate your collection areas.

Key Themes

Define the major themes and stories of your collection. What makes your collection special? Include important people, businesses or social groups, and also important changes over time. Refer to the building or site if they relate to the museums key themes. e.g. Maryborough Chinese camp, Development of the local wine industry and of winery tourism, the history of the Fitzgerald garden.

Historic period/time period

Define the time period that your collection covers, e.g. from 1900 to present.

Certain parts of your collection may relate to different time periods, e.g. domestic life in the district 1900-1940s (to support interpretation of a house museum depicting a particular families' residency)

Geographic area/region

Define the geographic region that your collection covers e.g. Shepparton and District

Physical items to be collected

Describe the type of material that your museum will collect, e.g. Maps, books, three dimensional objects etc.. This section will reflect your storage and display restrictions. For example, if you do not have the facilities to store large agricultural material then your collection policy should state this.

Access

Include general statements about making the collection and collection records accessible to researchers and the general public. Briefly describe how you provide access, eg through displays, talks, collection records available to researchers by appointment etc.

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4. HOW THE MUSEUM WILL COLLECT
4.1. METHOD OF ACQUISITION
How does the museum acquire objects for the permanent collection? e.g. The Museum shall acquire objects for the permanent collection by donation, bequest, purchase or transfer. Note: Conditional donations restrict museum activities. It is not advisable for museums to accept donations with conditions attached, you may wish to include a policy statement on this issue e.g. The Museum will not accept conditional donations.
4.2. ACQUISITION COMMITTEE
Who decides if a donation will be accepted? Detail who and how many museum members make up the Committee. E.g. The Acquisition Committee will consist of the President/ Curator and two-four Committee members. All recommendations made by the Committee will be documented and retained by the Museum/Society.

4.3. ACQUISITION CRITERIA

What criteria guide the collection of museum objects?

e.g. The Committee will consider the following criteria before approving acquisition of an object:

Relevance

The museum only collects objects that relate to the museum's purpose and key collecting areas

Significance

Priority is given to objects which are significant for their historic, aesthetic, scientific/research or social/spiritual value.

Provenance and Documentation

Priority will be given to objects where the history of the object is known and associated documentation and support material can be provided.

Condition, intactness, integrity

The condition of the object must be taken into consideration when acquiring material. Badly damaged material will not normally be accepted into the collection.

Interpretive Potential

Objects that tell a story that adds to the interpretation of museum themes will be prioritised.

Rarity

Objects may be prioritised if they are rare examples of a particular kind of object

Representativeness

Objects may be prioritised if they are an excellent representative example of a particular kind of object

Duplications

Objects that duplicate items already in the collection will not be accepted unless they are of superior condition and/or historic value. In such a case the duplicate may be considered for deaccessioning.

Legal Requirements The museum only accept objects where the done	or/vendor has legal title to the object
	

5. LEGAL / ETHICAL OBLIGATIONS 5.1. ABORIGINAL ARTEFACTS Does the museum own or have in its possession Aboriginal artefacts? e.g. The Committee acknowledges that it has a mandatory obligation under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 to register Victorian Aboriginal collection items in its possession with Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV). In instances where the provenance of certain Aboriginal artefacts is unknown, advice will be sought from Aboriginal Affairs Victoria. The Committee acknowledges that it is illegal to buy, sell or harm traditional Aboriginal objects without a cultural heritage permit. The Committee acknowledges that it is illegal to remove Aboriginal objects from Victoria without a cultural heritage permit, excluding loans between interstate museums The Committee acknowledges that while in most cases Aboriginal artefacts will remain the property of the museum, under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 human remains, and secret and sacred material legally belong to the traditional owners and should be repatriated. In accordance with Museums Australia Guidelines (ICOM Code of Ethics?), requests from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities for the return to them of cultural items held by the museum will be given serious consideration.

5.2. PROHIBITED WEAPONS
Does the museum own or possess any prohibited weapons?
Prohibited weapons fall under the <i>Control of Weapons Act 1990</i> , and include a broad range of objects including historical swords, blunt ceremonial swords, bayonets, batons, cat o'nine tails, and concealed weapons.
A full description of types of prohibited weapons can be found on the Victoria Police website: https://www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?Document_ID=25574
While museums may legitimately hold some types of prohibited weapons for display or as part of its permanent collection under the Act, others remain regulated because of the danger they pose to the community.
Museums enrolled or accredited with the Museums Accreditation Program (MAP) enjoy an exemption under the Act and may possess, display and purchase swords, daggers and crossbows.
Regardless of exemptions, however, all museums are obligated by law to ensure prohibited weapons in their possession are stored and displayed securely (see Firearms).

5.3. FIREARMS
Does the museum own possess firearms, including antique and or historic firearms?
Firearms, including longarms, pistols and handguns, fall under the <i>Firearms Act 1996</i> .
Longarms made before 1900, where no commercially ammunition is available, are exempt from licensing and registration requirements under the <i>Act</i> .
 Handguns are exempt from the licensing and registration requirements under the <i>Act</i> if they: Are made before 1900 and: Use percussion as a means of ignition, and Do not take commercially available ammunition or Are a single shot antique handgun.
Any organisation possessing firearms made after 1900, or other than that specified as exempt in Section 3(4) of the Firearms Act, must apply for an exemption (see Museums Australia (Victoria) Firearms resource sheet: http://www.mavic.asn.au/assets/Info_Sheet_15_Firearms.pdf).
Regardless of exemptions collecting organisations are obligated to ensure all firearms (and prohibited weapons) are appropriately stored and displayed as specified in Schedule 4 of the <i>Act</i> :
 All firearms must be stored (or displayed) in a locked receptacle, of sturdy construction. Display cases or storage cabinets must be constructed of hard wood or steel and be not easily penetrable. Receptacles weighing less than 150 kilograms when empty must be fixed to the frame of
 the floor or the wall of the premises where the firearm is kept in such a manner that it is not easily removable. Display cases should be locked at all times and made with toughened glass or Perspex. Items fixed to the wall must be done so in a way that they cannot be readily removed. Museums with more than 15 firearms on the premises must have an approved intruder alarm system installed (the specifics of which are explained in Schedule 4 of the Firearms
Act 1996). While there is yet to be definitive legislation with regards to museums possessing or displaying live and or decommissioned ammunition, following consultation with Victoria Police and the Department of Justice, it is recommended that museums store and display cartridge ammunition separate from where firearms are stored and according to those requirements outlined in Schedule 4, Item 5 of the Firearms Act.
Museums enrolled or accredited with the Museum Accreditation Program (MAP) have an exemption to hold imitation firearms under Section 8B of the <i>Act</i> .

5.4. SHIPWRECK MATERIAL
Does the museum own or have in its possession any shipwreck material?
In Victoria there are two pieces of legislation protecting shipwrecks and their associated artefacts depending on where they are located:
 Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976: Covers shipwrecks in Commonwealth waters, which for this act is from the low water mark to the continental shelf. Victorian Heritage Act 1995: Protects shipwrecks in State waters covering enclosed waters including bays and rivers such as Port Phillip bay, the Yarra River and Western port.
Basically, the Crown controls all historic shipwreck artefacts. While private people and museums can be identified as the custodians of shipwreck artefacts, they are not the owners. Custodians have a responsibility to keep and protect shipwreck relics in their care and cannot sell or tamper with them. It is also the responsibility of custodians to professionally conserve artefacts and prevent them from deterioration.
Shipwreck legislation has a rolling date of 75 years, meaning that shipwreck items in museum collections can become historic over time, thereby falling under the protection of the Act. When this happens, it is the responsibility of the Museum to ensure items are appropriately catalogued in the museum database and complete a wreck notification form with Heritage Victoria.

6. COLLECTION CARE: DOCUMENTATION, CONSERVATION & STORAGE

6.1. DOCUMENTATION & RECORD KEEPING

State how you will manage your object documentation.

e.g. The Museum aims at all times to maintain an effective documentation system. Donor forms, receipts, Museum Registers, and catalogue information will be kept at the Museum.

Outline guidelines for acquiring and processing collection material.

e.g. The Museum will follow the guidelines below when acquiring material:

Note: These examples are at their most detailed and you may need to refine them for your organisation.

- 1. Owner or agent brings the object to the Museum.
- 2. A receipt is issued to the owner recording the object name, address of the owner and contact number and date. The same information is written on a tag and attached to the object.
- 3. This records that the museum is holding the object and does not mean or imply the object has been accepted as part of the permanent collection.
- 4. Notes on the history and associations of the object will be taken, for the Acquisition Committee to consider when assessing the object..
- 5. The Acquisition Committee meets to assess the donation for inclusion in the Museum collection. Their decision is documented.
- 6. Refused objects are returned to the owner with an explanatory letter. If the object is not claimed within 90 days it will become the property of the Museum and may be disposed of.
- 7. If the object is accepted donors sign two copies of the Donor form, one for the museum and one to keep. A letter of thanks is sent to the donor.
- 8. The object must be registered, numbered and catalogued. Where documentation relating to the significance of the object is available, an object file will be kept.
- 9. The object and object number is listed under the name of the donor in the of donor book/files.

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6.2. STORAGE & CONSERVATION

Describe how you will care for your collection.

- e.g. The Museum aims to achieve high standards of collection care and storage
 - Storage areas must remain clean, secure and sealed against the weather.
 - Temperature and relative humidity should be kept as stable as possible
 - Access to storage areas is to be controlled.
 - Ultra-violet light should be excluded from storage areas. When storage areas are not in use lights must be turned off.
 - Archival quality storage materials should be used for all significant material.
 - Storage areas must be regularly checked for pests and other problems.
 - Objects are not to be stored on the floor
 - Untrained personnel should never attempt to clean, treat or restore museum objects.

7. DEACCESSIONING AND DISPOSAL PROCEDURES		
Deaccessioning is the administrative process of removing an item from the collection.		
7.1. CRITERIA FOR DEACCESSIONING		
For what reason can an object be removed from the collection?		
e.g. An object can be deaccessioned from the Museum's collection if		
It does not comply with the current collection policy of the museum		
It is damaged beyond repair		
The conservation and storage costs for it are beyond the means of the museum		
It is a lesser quality duplicate of an object the museum already owns		
 It lacks any supporting information to enable proper identification or to establish its relevance to the collection 		
 A substantiated request for the return of the object to its original owner/donor is received. This could be the return of sacred material to Indigenous peoples. 		

7.2 DEACCESSION PROCEDURES What is the procedure to formally de-accession something from the collection? e.g. The object identified for removal from the collection must come before the Acquisition Committee for consideration with close reference to the criteria stated above. • The object identified for de-accession must be held for a twelve month "cooling off" period before it is finally disposed of. • Staff, volunteers, committee members and their families are prohibited from purchasing, or otherwise obtaining, a de-accessioned object. • Any funds acquired from the sale of the de-accessioned item should be used for acquisitions or care of the collection.

7.3. DISPOSAL PROCEDURES What is the correct process to remove an object from the collection? e.g. In priority order the object must be: 1. Returned to the donor or family. If after a thorough search this is impossible, the object should be; 2. Transferred to another appropriate institution 3. Sold by public auction, where appropriate 4. Used as an educative/interpretive tool 5. Destroyed or recycled if appropriate

8. WINDING-UP PROCEDURES

Any association with assets of more than \$10,000 must be wound up in accordance with the *Commonwealth Corporations Act 2001*.

Often included in an organisation's constitution or founding document, it is also a good idea to include a museum's wind up clause in its Collection Policy so that staff are aware of how the collection should be legally and ethically dealt with in the event the organisation ceases to operate. This is also in accordance with the *National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries (A1.1.3 & A1.1.4)*.

A museum wind up clause should also differentiate between 'assets' that may be sold and the museum collection, which should be disposed of according to recognised museum ethics (*NSFAMG*, A1.1.4). In addition to this, museums registered as **deductible gift recipients** (DGRs) or the **Cultural Gifts Program** are required to include specific wording to define their 'wind-up' procedures in their constitution as it is illegal to return collection items to donors who have received a tax benefit.

The following example is based on the Model Rules supplied though Consumer Affairs Victoria in accordance with the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012: 76 Winding up and cancellation (1) The Association may be wound up voluntarily by special resolution (2) In the event of the winding up or cancellation of the incorporation of the Association the surplus assets of the Association must not be distributed to any members or former members of the Associations. (3) Subject to the Act any court order made under section 133 of the Act, in the event of the Association being wound up: a) The collection, consisting of acquired articles, documents, photographs and records, that have been formally catalogued, those awaiting cataloguing in a collection management system shall be dealt with as follows:i) Any item that has been loaned shall be returned to the lender, ii) The collection of the Association shall be transferred to a similar institution to which tax deductible gifts can be made b) Any surplus assets remaining after the payment of the Association's liabilities shall be transferred to another organisation with similar objectives to which income tax deductable gifts can be made. (4) If the endorsement of the organisation as a deductable gift recipient is revoked the following shall be transferred to another organisation to which income tax deductible gifts can be made - any surplus · Gifts of money or property for the purpose of the organisation · Contributions made in relation to an eligible fundraising event held for the principal purpose of the organisation, and · Money received by the organisation because of such gifts and contributions

9.	LOANS	
	9.1. LOAN PROCEDURES	
Explain what kinds of loans you enter into and conditions under which material is lent and borrowed.		
e.g	 Permanent and long term loans will not be accepted by the Museum. The Museum will lend and borrow material to help meet its purpose. The Museum holds separate forms for inward and outward loans. The maximum loan period is 12 months. 	

9.2. INWARD LOANS

How inward (incoming) loans are managed.

An inward loan form should include the period of the loan and conditions of the loan. Include a sample loan form.

e.g.

- Inward loans shall only be accepted for specific exhibitions or research and for fixed periods of time.
- Inward loans shall be recorded in a separate Loans Register
- A representative of both the museum and the lender will be required to sign an agreed inward loan form. Each party will hold a copy of this agreement. This form will record conditions of the loan and the period of the loan.
- The Museum agrees to exercise the same care with respect to loans as it does for its own collection
- Loans shall remain in the possession of the Museum for the time specified on the form.
- The Museum can request to renew loans if required. Documentation recording renewal must be signed by a Museum Officer and the lender.

A sample inward loan form is attached

9.3. OUTWARD LOANS

How outward (outgoing) loans are managed.

An inward loan form should include the period of the loan and conditions of the loan. Include a sample loan form.

e.g.

- The Museum will lend objects to other museums and organisations holding collections. It will not lend to private collectors.
- Borrowers and a representative from the Museum will be required to sign two outward loan agreement forms. Each party will hold a copy of this agreement. This form will record condition of the loan and the period of the loan.
- The borrower must exercise care in the handling, storage and display of the loan object and must be prepared to meet the conditions outlined in the outward loan agreement.
- The borrower will provide a secure display and/or storage area.
- The maximum loan period is 12 months. Applications for extension of this period must be made prior to the loan expiry date.
- Objects cannot be treated or altered in any way without the written permission of the Museum.
- Loans will remain in the possession of the borrower until returned to the Museum.

A sample outward loan form is attached

10. ORAL HISTORY POLICY Do you collect oral histories? What conditions apply for the collection of oral histories? If you don't collect oral histories your Collection Policy should make a statement such as The X Museum does not collect oral histories. If you do collect oral histories include an your oral history policy statement, e.g. An Oral History Agreement is signed by the person interviewed, which clearly states the purpose and intended uses of the interviews and what copyright provisions apply. The museum abides by the Guidelines of Ethical Practice of the Oral History Association of Australia. 11. ACCESS Include general statements about making the collection and collection records accessible to researchers and the general public etc. Briefly describe how you provide access. e.g. The Collection is accessible to the public through regular opening hours and by appointment. The collection records are accessible for research purposes by appointment. Images of selected collection items are accessible through the museum website.

12. REVIEW YOUR COLLECTION POLICY		
Decide on an appropriate period to review your collection policy.		
e.g. The Museum will review its Collection Policy every three years. Date of next review – December 2017		
13. DATE OF ENDORSEMENT		
Date the plan was endorsed, and the names, signatures and roles/positions of the people responsible for this		
e.g. 2 December 2014, Committee Meeting of the Brindel Historical Society Signed Mary Rose Panas , President		